



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA • THE SENATE

GORDON D. McINTOSH
SENATOR FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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30.1.1986

Prime Minister,
Anibal Cavaco Silva,
Palacio de Sao Bento,
LISBON. PORTUGAL.

Dear Prime Minister,

We, as Federal Parliamentarians of the Australian Labor Party, would like to inform your Government of our continuing interest and concern about the question of East Timor.

We were pleased to learn of the comments of President Eanes at the United Nations, on October 24th, 1985, in which he declared Portugal would act to guarantee the rights of the East Timorese until they actually exercise the right of self-determination.

Similarly, we were encouraged by media reports that the new Portuguese Parliament unanimously endorsed, on December 6th, 1985, a pledge to support increased Portuguese diplomacy directed towards "a just settlement in line with the norms of international law and the Portuguese Constitution."

We feel very strongly that it is only through your Government's continued active and positive diplomacy that the rights of the East Timorese will remain on the international agenda. As 1986 will be a crucial year for East Timor in terms of international diplomacy, we are anxious to learn of your Government's proposed initiatives on the matter.

Specifically, we would be very interested to hear your Government's views on the following:-

A. The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Dr. Mochtar, reportedly told an Indonesian Parliamentary Committee on November 14th that Portugal was moving towards recognising Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor.

While Dr. Mochtar's claim contradicts our knowledge of Portugal's position, we are not aware of a specific response from Lisbon to his statement.

2.

B. Dr. Mochtar was also reported to have said that Portugal was opposed to Fretilin participation in talks under UN auspices.

As we see it, there can be no just and lasting solution if it does not reflect the views and aspirations of the East Timorese themselves. We feel very strongly that East Timorese should participate in the UN talks process.

On the specific question of Fretilin, as referred to by Dr. Mochtar, it is our understanding that Fretilin does not claim to be the sole representative of the Timorese and, indeed, the resistance organisation includes nationalists with different views. However, Fretilin has clearly played the major role in organised resistance to the annexation and therefore should be part of any East Timorese representation at international talks concerned with East Timor's future.

C. We are aware that the Indonesian Government has devoted many resources over the years to persuade other countries to withdraw their support for East Timorese self-determination at the United Nations.

We would be pleased to learn whether your Government has considered approaching other Governments, especially in the European and Asian regions, which have consistently supported the principle of self-determination, and asking them to take a higher profile in support of the United Nations talk process?

D. You will be aware that our Labor Party policy calls on the Australian Labor Government to give active support to international initiatives that have the aim of achieving a settlement of the Timor problem and says, specifically, the Government should support the efforts of the UN Secretary-General to bring about a solution.

A statement by your Government indicating positive moves that other Governments could take to support the United Nations talk process, would certainly assist us in formulating requests for action to our Government in line with our Party's policy on the issue.

3.

We are aware of the difficulties confronting attempts by your Government to defend the basic right of the East Timorese to genuine self-determination. Please be assured that we will give every assistance we can to ensure a positive Australian contribution to any international diplomacy concerned with the future of the East Timorese.

This letter has been endorsed by:

Senator Gordon McIntosh, Senator for Western Australia
Senator Olive Zakharov, Senator for Victoria
Mr. Peter Milton, Member for La Trobe, Victoria
Senator Nick Bolkus, Senator for South Australia
Mr. Tony Lamb, Member for Streeeton, Victoria
Senator Ted Robertson, Senator for the Northern Territory
Hon. Peter Duncan, Member for Makin, South Australia
Senator George Georges, Senator for Queensland
Senator Bruce Childs, Senator for New South Wales
Ms. Wendy Fatin, Member for Brand, Western Australia
Mr. John Langmore, Member for Fraser, A.C.T.
Mr. Peter Staples, Member for Jagajaga, Victoria
Senator Jim McKiernan, Senator for Western Australia
Dr. Andrew Theophanous, Member for Calwell, Victoria
Mr. Allen Blanchard, Member for Moore, Western Australia
Senator Ruth Coleman, Senator for Western Australia
Mr. John Scott, Member for Hindmarsh, South Australia
Senator Margaret Reynolds, Senator for Queensland
Mr. Lewis Kent, Member for Hotham, Victoria
Mr. Graeme Campbell, Member for Kalgoorlie, Western Australia
Mrs. Carolyn Jakobsen, Member for Cowan, Western Australia
Mr. Peter Baldwin, Member for Sydney, New South Wales
Mr. Colin Hollis, Member for Throsby, New South Wales
Mr. John Saunderson, Member for Aston, Victoria
Senator Barney Cooney, Senator for Victoria
Senator Ray Devlin, Senator for Tasmania
Senator John Coates, Senator for Tasmania
Senator Patricia Giles, Senator for Western Australia
Senator Michael Tate, Senator for Tasmania
Mr. Robert Tickner, Member for Hughes, New South Wales
Ms. Jeannette McHugh, Member for Phillip, New South Wales
Mr. Jim Snow, Member for Eden-Monaro, New South Wales
Mr. Gerry Hand, Member for Melbourne, Victoria.

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE ABOVENAMED,

GORDON D. MCINTOSH.